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Salisbury City Council Approves Local Permitting Ordinance

Salisbury, NC – October 18, 2011_Through a unanimous vote, the Salisbury City Council approved an ordinance that will significantly reduce approval time for local development projects. The approved ordinance is contingent upon the delegation of authority by the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources (NCDENR) for the City of Salisbury to grant final approval of certain water and sewer extension plans. Two divisions of NCDENR and the North Carolina Attorney General's Office previously approved the draft ordinance.

Final authority over water supply extensions will be delegated by the Division of Public Water Supply office of NCDENR. Final authority over sewer collection extensions will be delegated by the Division of Water Quality Office of NCDENR. Delegation will occur on two different days, therefore the consolidated draft ordinance presented to the Salisbury City Council by City Engineer, Dan Mikkelson will apply temporarily to only the first program delegated and then ultimately to both programs.

Currently, private developers must submit utility plans to the City of Salisbury for review and approval. Upon approval by the City, the developer then must submit plans to NCDENR for review and approval which typically requires two to three additional months. Delegation of authority, as outlined in the ordinance adopted by City Council will save developers several months in turnaround time and provide savings in material and staffing costs on every water extension project. Furthermore, local permitting authority supports a City Council goal aimed at streamlining development review processes and ordinances.

City Engineer Dan Mikkelson shared, "Local permitting authority will reduce the redundancy of the permitting process. A quick review process is one more incentive to develop projects within our service area."

During the public comment session slated for this agenda item, four Salisbury residents, spoke in support of local permitting authority, including former Salisbury City Council members, William (Bill) Burgin and Mark Lewis who were involved in past efforts that embraced this City Council goal.

Bill Burgin stated, "I believe fundamentally that government is best able to serve local citizens when it is provided locally. This permitting authority puts the approval for needed water and sewer extensions within our hands."

Mark Lewis added, "I will say that anyone who has to extend water and sewer lines, this is a major benefit. Time is money."

Rodney Queen, elaborated, "I support this change wholeheartedly." Development is very very crucial to the growth of our city so we want to support all the changes we can to make that positive."

Victor Wallace speaking in general support of approving the proposed ordinance, also encouraged City Council to continue review of the City's Land Development Ordinance as an additional measure of further providing a business friendly community.

Salisbury Mayor Susan W. Kluttz thanked former Council members Burgin and Lewis for their important efforts in starting the process several years ago and shared their excitement for moving efforts forward. Kluttz further added her appreciation the experienced based comments made by Queen and Wallace.

Councilman Paul Woodson, stated, "I think we've made some progress over the last several years moving business development forward." He applauded efforts made by City staff in pursuit of the ordinance.

Mayor Pro Tem Maggie Blackwell added her appreciation of the ordinance in regard to City Council's desire to become more business friendly. Blackwell stated, "Saving a developer 10-12 weeks would certainly rank right up there."

Councilman Brian Miller shared his support of what he stated as a monumental effort by stating, "Anytime you can take the development process and shorten or cut certain steps out without compromising quality and the integrity of the system, this is a huge accomplishment.

Councilman William (Pete) Kennedy agreed with Councilman Miller's statements and motioned for approval of the ordinance.

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